



# Divine Word Missionaries (SVD)



Newsletter of Arnold Janssen Spirituality Animation Team of Hong Kong and Macau District

## Editorial

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The parents of Saint Arnold Janssen (1837-1909) had immense faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. They exhibited great devotion to the Holy Trinity and they lived as an example of Christ's love. Prayer was given an utmost importance in their daily lives and this was in accordance to the words of St Paul, "Pray always". The prayerful family atmosphere and devotion to our Lord moulded Arnold to have profound faith and a spirit of prayer. He had enormous affection for the Sacred Heart of Jesus to the extent that around the age of 13, he composed an evening prayer that was recited not only in his family but also in the neighbouring families as well.

Bible reading, especially the Prologue of John's Gospel was a routine practice during illness and tribulations. He had great trust in the power of prayer and considered it as the greatest weapon in the world. This was reflected in his preaching and in his prayer life. In 1869, as a young priest he addressed the German Catholic Congress where he emphasized that "Christ needs our prayers and sacrifices. We must pray for the grace of renewal of faith in Catholic countries, pray that our separated brethren, our family members and the entire people on this earth, may return to the unity of faith. We should hope for this from God's grace". Because he understood the spiritual needs of people, not only in his community and diocese, but also beyond these limits, he subsequently dedicated his life to animate the German Church in living up to its missionary responsibility.

This exemplary life of St Arnold should encourage each one of us to restore our faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ and try to remain as an example of his love in this world. Remember, the power of prayer cannot be explained in words rather it is a feeling that each one of us should experience. A famous philosopher once said, "In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart".

The second issue of this newsletter could not have been possible without the grace of God and the intercession of our founder. This issue highlights our Founder's prayer life and thereby facilitates our understanding of the importance of prayer in our life's journey. Furthermore, a list of prayers that our founder composed, including the short prayer that he recited every fifteen minutes in order to remain in constant communion with the blessed Trinity, can be found in this issue.

Prayer is essential to each one of us if we want to bear good fruits in our Lord's vineyard. Therefore, we (AJSTHKM team) trust that the prayer life of our Founder will certainly be a source of inspiration to all of us in discovering ourselves and leading a prayerful life; thus, fulfilling our Lord's words "Abide in me as I abide in you".

Rev. Johnson Dhos, SVD

AND THE WORD  
WAS WITH GOD,  
AND  
THE WORD  
WAS  
GOD



## About St. Arnold Janssen

## Saint Arnold's Family: A family always that prays together...

Many of us always complain about the lack of time to pray because of our busy schedule. We succumb to the fast-phased, multi-tasking life we are living. Parents are busy working, children are busy doing their homework, and others are busy doing other things. It may be possible that more and more Christians are busy checking their Facebook and Twitter accounts than reading the Bible or spending a little time for prayer. As we explore the Spirituality of St. Arnold Janssen, let us reflect in this short story about his family, the root of Arnold's prayer life and how they integrated prayer in their daily activities.

Fr. Peter Bill, one of Arnold Janssen's first coworkers in Steyl, who, however, left in April 1876 because of irreconcilable differences, tells this little story:

"When I arrived in Goch from Gaesdonck [the High School which Arnold Janssen had attended as a young boy] in 1876, I still had about a quarter of an hour's time before the train would leave. I decided to pay a visit to the home of Father Janssen. It was just growing dusk; the lamps had not yet been lighted. The brothers of Father Janssen were busy in the kitchen butchering a pig they had just slaughtered. Their mother, meanwhile, flitted back and forth between the kitchen and the living room. When I entered at the front door I heard such a humming and buzzing in the house. I doubted whether I should proceed or not. But as I came closer, I realized that as they worked they were alternating in the recitation of the rosary in loud but reverent voices." (From: Fritz Bornemann, ed., Remembering Arnold Janssen, A Book of Reminiscences, Rome 1978. p. 22-23).

With this story, we have a glimpse of the place of prayer in the life of the family of St. Arnold Janssen. No wonder the SVD considers the quarter-hour prayer, (a prayer recited after every fifteen minutes), as its jewel because it is a prayer that invites us to pause from our work and pray to God. It appears to be very difficult and yet in a closer look this prayer must be a fruit of St. Arnold's experience in his family.

Another account of the Janssen's family prayer life is taken from Fr. Hermann Fischer's, book *You are the Temple of God*. It can help us reflect about the spirituality of the Founder of the SVD. (Fr. Fischer entered the SVD during the time of the Founder and knew him personally. He is the one who wrote the first biography of Arnold Janssen.) He wrote:

"This usually silent man Gerhard, (Arnold's father), who always prayed when he was working in the fields for hours or when he had to walk beside his horses, spoke to his children with great warmth about God and his works, his power and his love. On Sundays and feast days the sermon was discussed after dinner, and the children were examined to see if they had paid proper attention. Afterward, he tested the children about their catechism, taught and instructed them like a priest. Every evening during Lent he read the epistle and the gospel of the day and explained the meaning of the text to his children. Similarly, on winter evenings, portions of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, or especially the Epistles of St. Paul or the holy legends were read. And he explained what had been read in an edifying manner. The overruling theme was directed to the honor of God and the necessity of fidelity in his service. The father understood how to refer the works of God to each of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, leading to the veneration of the whole Trinity."

Put prayer in your work or pray as you work? Arnold Janssen was blessed with a family that gave importance to prayer more than any other thing in their lives. They remind us that prayer is life and not only a part of it.

Rev. Alfredo Rollon, SVD





## St. Arnold Spirituality

### **P**ray Always and Never Lose Heart (Luke 18: 1)

Saint Arnold Janssen, the SVD founder, put great emphasis on prayer. He felt that prayer was a staple to missionary work— an absolute necessity. This tenet of his spirituality was so deeply rooted that after founding the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, he and Sister Maria Helena co-founded the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters, commonly known as the Pink Sisters. They are a contemplative order of cloistered nuns who devote their lives in praying for the missions.

From a book called Arnold Janssen – Man of Prayer, we know that prayer for a deepening of faith, hope and love had an extraordinary prominent place in Saint Arnold's prayer life. His tireless missionary work for the intentions of the Sacred Heart allows us to conclude that his own prayer was also thoroughly apostolic and missionary. That is why he always recited "May the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people" because the Heart of Jesus, for him, was the spiritual center of the God-man Jesus Christ, in whom the never-ending love of God the Father is revealed, and who invites us to share life and mission with him. Saint Arnold took his spiritual life seriously. Once he wrote to his father: "I made my retreat in the Capuchin monastery...I liked it a lot. I spent the whole day alone with some books and dined alone. I went to bed the same as the Capuchins at eight in the evening and rose with them at 12 at night." (Gripped by the Mystery: Arnold Janssen – Man of Prayer, p. 42-43) We can sense from here how Saint Arnold's own disposition towards prayer and spiritual life was increasingly taking shape. He became a man of prayer, often and gladly seeking communion with his God.

As followers of Jesus Christ, as missionaries, especially as SVDs, we should follow the footsteps of St. Arnold

Janssen, because prayer is the best way to communicate with God; prayer is the vehicle for daily dialogue with God; prayer gives us an opportunity to share all aspects of our lives with God; prayer gives us the chance to express our gratitude for the things God provides; prayer provides the platform for confessing our sin and asking for help; and finally, prayer is a way to acknowledge who is really in control of our lives. Even from the Gospel, Jesus reminds each of us: Pray always and never lose heart (Luke 18: 1). What does Jesus mean by saying pray always? Some of us may say we cannot pray all day because there are so many things to be done. Actually, Jesus does not ask us to do anything but pray. Let me give a practical example to explain how to pray always. For instance, when we go to Central from Tung Chung we can take a bus to get there. When we see the bus at a distance we run to catch the bus, but the bus is gone before we can get in. At this moment, we may either curse the bus driver who does not wait for us or calm down and pray. Or when we take the MTR, we try to board the MTR as we hear the warning sound Dudududu, but we cannot get in as the door is shut in front of us. At this moment we may either get mad or take a deep breath and pray for two minutes as we wait for the next train. When we have difficulties or problems with our communities, with our families, or with our friends, we don't know what to do. We are upset. At this moment we may either fight with them or we pray. That is what Jesus means when He said: Pray always.

Honestly, God doesn't need our prayers, but we need them. Therefore, as Christians we need to pray always because without prayer in our Christian life there can be no fellowship with the Lord or no power to testify for the kingdom of God through our daily lives. Prayer has the power to change us, regardless of what we ask for. Prayer cultivates in us a dependency upon God. It has been said that a prayer-less Christian is a powerless Christian. Thus, as followers of Jesus Christ, as missionaries, we need to listen to what Jesus says, "Pray always and never lose heart" (Luke 18: 1).

Rev. John Zhang, SVD





## Witnesses of SVD Fathers

### Quarter Hour Prayer

God, eternal truth: We believe in you.  
God, our strength and salvation: We hope in you.  
God, infinite goodness: We love you with all our hearts.  
You have sent the Word as Savior of the world: Make us all one in him.  
Fill us with the Spirit of your Son: That we may glorify your name. Amen.

**W**hen Fr. Arnold Janssen founded the Society of the Divine Word, he was very much concerned that the members would have a real religious spirit. Otherwise, how could they bring the Gospel to other people, if they themselves were not full of the spirit of the Gospel?

Therefore, in the first mission house in Steyl he introduced a very special prayer, namely the “Quarter Hour Prayer”. All the clocks in the house at every quarter of the hour would sound and everybody—whatever he was doing—would stop for a moment and pray this short Quarter Hour Prayer. Several hundred priests, brothers and students lived in the house. Often there were also big groups of lay people coming for retreats and sharing the religious life for few days. They all joined in this prayer. Every 15 minutes the whole house would stop for one minute and direct their thoughts and prayers to God the Father of all. In this way, all day was filled with the spirit of prayer, that Jesus wants us to have. When Saint Joseph Freinademetz first came to Steyl in 1878, he wrote in a letter to his parents: “This is truly a house of God. Here the spirit of piety and fear of God reigns.”

This prayer is not only to ask for something. It is much more a profession of faith and a dedication to God the Father, to the Divine Word and to the Holy Spirit. The content of the quarter hour prayer can be summed up as follows:

- 1 • First, to God who is a caring and merciful Father for his children, we express faith, hope and love: we believe in God, we trust in God and we love God with all our hearts.
- 2 • Then, we dedicate ourselves to the Savior, Jesus Christ, in order that we can more and more enter into the spirit of the Divine Word and be able to share this Word with all people.
- 3 • Finally, we ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the burning love of Jesus, so that we may bring glory to God the Father.

All who want to associate themselves with the Divine Word Missionaries should try to learn by heart this short prayer and say it anytime of the day you think of it, or when you have a free moment, maybe when you are inside a bus or when you sit in front of your computer waiting for it to connect, or in any other places or times. In this way you will strengthen your own faith and live more and more in the presence of God. God will bless you and you will be able to share this faith with the people around you.

**Rev. Jac Kuepers, SVD**